

# MANAS

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## SYNANON REVISITED

**I**N late August of last year, an editor of MANAS, having heard that a group of ex-drug addicts, housed by Synanon, Inc., were having some trouble with the authorities, suggested that we visit their home and headquarters at 1351 Ocean Front, in Santa Monica. That visit was one of the most exciting evenings either of us had experienced, and before noon the next day, I had finished writing the article, "Ex-Addicts, Incorporated," that appeared in MANAS for Sept. 14, 1960. Synanon House had exuded an aura of successful living that overpowered my skepticism about addicts staying "clean" under any but the most extraordinary auspices.

I was puzzled and intrigued; I had to see more of Synanon. There was no trouble about that; Charles E. (Chuck) Dederich, and his board of directors, not only invited me to visit whenever I chose, but insisted that I move in and stay as long as I wished.

Move in, I did—first for a week; then, a month and a half ago, for a period which will continue until I complete a book about Synanon and its people. Living with fifty or more dope fiends—their own designation for themselves—might seem an adventure to some, or a novel way of gathering morbid material, but to me it has been an experience in a new dynamic of family life that each day brings some fresh reward.

At one time, I counselled drug addicts in a clinic within a penal institution, and was continually depressed by the hopelessness they felt and which I couldn't break through. My civil service title was "Mental Health Therapist," but to the addicts I was only an odd sort of warden who had been hired so that the public could compensate for at least a little of the guilt felt for punishing sick men. Here, in Synanon, people sometimes seek my counsel, and since I am no longer an apologist for a sick society I can give freely of the little I know and have it taken seriously by the free man who comes to me. And I'm far from depressed and hopeless about the addicts I live with.

The essence of Synanon is the open door that swings both ways. The sick, outlawed, and harried addict who is under an irresistible compulsion to commit at least \$50 worth of crime every day in order to pay for his habit, can enter Synanon and find a haven. There he will have to kick his habit the hard way, just as he would have to in jail, or in a State Hospital where derision would be the rule, and sympathy a novelty. In Synanon, however, sympathy and empathy are the rule in the period between indoctrination and the

day that drug-free health returns. If at any point the addict decides that the going is too tough, he can walk out, although Synanon members will try to discourage him from doing so. Thus, when he does kick the habit "cold turkey," without the aid of drugs, he has a feeling of accomplishment that he wouldn't have had under any other circumstances. He has made a moral investment in Synanon, and is part of it.

"No addict ever comes to Synanon for a cure," Chuck Dederich states flatly. Interviews with members prove him right in this statement. Most come because the law is breathing down their neck, or because they need a respite from the ever-increasing amount of crime their habit demands. If they kick and get built up physically, they can then go back to drugs with a habit that will be less demanding, for a while, at least. A man I interviewed recently, an addict of 20 years standing who can make money easier than most, told me he came in to cut down on his habit, and when he was clean—completely off drugs—he stayed on, just to see if a couple of other old-timers would make it. For several months, a sort of malicious curiosity kept him clean, and then he began to notice that he felt better than he had ever before in his life. As a child, he had been taught that the only wrong was being caught, and that right was doing well for yourself in a material way, preferably by crime. Up until eight months after entering Synanon, he had adhered strictly to the criminal code. Now, after eighteen months in the group, he admits—with some embarrassment—that his new ethic and morality may have ruined him as a hustler and dope fiend. Actually, you'd have to search for an addict less likely to stay off drugs. "By enabling man to go right, disabling him to go wrong" is a slogan Synanon has taken from Lao-Tze. The man I have just described is a living example of that slogan in action.

Although Synanon now has enough experienced "old-timers" to expand and open new houses, Chuck Dederich, the founder, continues as something more than a leader. In the past, there were times when he was incapable of even leading himself, but you have to take his word for that, since it's impossible to know him now, and think of him as less than a leader in any situation. He has the carriage of a gladiator, and his features are square and aggressive. Even when he's relaxing, which is a lot of the time, he exudes an aura of power. He might be thought to be rigid, stubborn and impervious to ideas from the outside, but behind this façade is a man whose intuitions and intellectual curi-

osity leaven the rigidity and stubbornness. He has the toughness that he knows is needed to control dope fiends, but when this is used to keep men and women from destroying themselves, no one can doubt the tenderness hidden behind it. He has learned the hard way that the kind of "tender loving care" that allows a dope fiend a few pills or an occasional fix doesn't work, and that a permissiveness which lets them go out on their own too soon is destructive.

Four or five years ago, Chuck realized that he was an alcoholic and had lost control of his life. His drinking was so progressive and uninterrupted that when he went to Alcoholics Anonymous and sobered up, he decided that he had had his first and last hangover. In keeping with his obsessive personality, he threw himself completely into the work of that organization, giving up his job, his home, and living "catch as catch can." During this period, he was undoubtedly storing away a lot of knowledge of the addictive personality without any idea of how he would make use of it. Then, one day, he heard that a psychiatrist from UCLA was giving LSD (a form of lysergic acid) to alcoholics in an attempt to bring their problems to the surface. He decided to give this theory a test.

What happened can only be handled sketchily here. Chuck was an atypical patient in that he experienced no regression, no sensory enhancement or hallucinations. During the active period of LSD intoxication, his normal traits appeared merely in a sort of caricature. One phrase that came into his mind impressed him: "It doesn't matter, but, at the same time it matters exquisitely." He would go to his room and give way to tears for an hour or more every day. Even with the seeming grief, there was euphoria.

When the grief-bearing memories and the euphoria left, the strange feeling of omnipotence and omniscience that had been with him from the beginning continued. He felt that he could resolve all paradoxes and, indeed, he did seem to confound many of the people he met and argued with. This lasted for nearly six months, but after that it remained certain that he had undergone a personality change. As the psychiatrist who had given him the LSD put it, "You were poised and were mustering your forces toward a goal that wasn't clear to you, and the LSD experience triggered those forces." Another LSD treatment simply made Chuck a little tipsy for a few hours. The omnipotence and omniscience of the earlier period had vanished, but he felt more sure of himself than he ever had before.

Anyone who knows Chuck knows that he is a realist who has very little belief in magic, chemical or otherwise, and yet he believes, with what seems good reason, that LSD was responsible for the personal clarity and drive from which Synanon emerged. He now thinks that LSD is not safe for alcoholics and addicts. The three alcoholics who took the drug with him have all gone to pot. Every member of Synanon who has taken LSD has returned to drugs, or become impossible to deal with. In his case, however, LSD does seem to have released a man to meet his destiny.

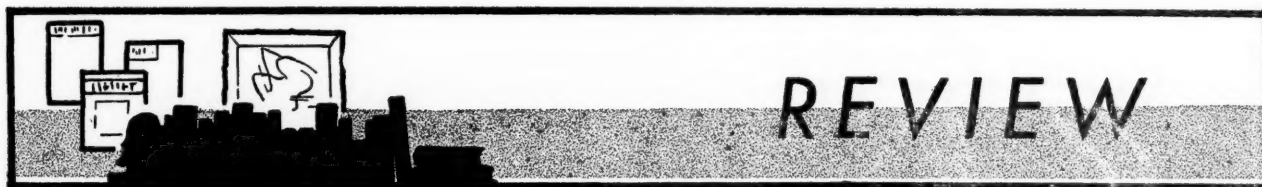
He rented an apartment in Ocean Park, and soon it became a haven for alcoholics who wanted to discuss their own and the world's problems. Soon he was sleeping on the davenport, and ex-drunks with no place to go were sleeping on his bed and on the floor. Although Chuck's education was Jesuit, the stress on religion in A.A. bothered

him, and the psychological and philosophical approach, as well as the sociological, seemed to him to be neglected. Soon he had attracted a small group, and they were holding what he calls "Anonymous Anonymous Meetings," a sort of self-help group without a professional leader. A moderator was chosen from the group. Chuck was almost always the moderator, and as word of the group spread, there were several meetings each week. What set this work apart was that Chuck had a knack of getting people to take the wraps off and really have at it. The landlord was soon complaining of the noise.

At about this time, the only dope fiend Chuck had ever knowingly met showed up, and soon he attracted several others. To the surprise of everyone, some of them actually began staying off drugs. Without Chuck particularly willing it, a colony began to form around him, those with money chipping in to pay for the food and rent of those without. What is now known as Synanon had begun to take shape; more drug addicts were coming to meetings, and caste-conscious alcoholics were dropping out. Chuck didn't know much about drug addicts at that stage, but of one thing he was sure—they would do better under one roof where he could keep an eye on them.

An old store building was rented, furniture and bedding hustled, and what was known as the T.L.C. Club (tender loving care) was open for "business," with almost forty customers and no money in the cash register. The Beatnik joints up the street were not as colorful by design as T.L.C. was by necessity. Each meal meant that a few dollars had to be raised somewhere. "It will emerge" and "It doesn't matter" became slogans. Candles were used at night and after group therapy, addict musicians would form a combo and release their hostility, or feeling of victory, as the case might be. But out of the chaos, where the moans of agony of those kicking the drug habit mixed in with the exuberance of those who were clean and those who were using drugs on the sly, order was emerging. Chuck was getting tougher at the group sessions, and he was learning about drug addicts from those he counselled personally. The wild, authority-hating complex of misfits he had collected looked up to him and made strong and positive transferences, and respectfully called him "Dad."

Then came "the night of the big cop out." Synanon picked up the center of its unifying dynamic overnight. Some of the members had been smoking marijuana and taking fixes of heroin on the sly. They'd been letting Chuck down, but, more important, they had been letting themselves down. By almost unanimous consent they agreed to tell the truth to Chuck and the members who had stayed clean. One after the other, nearly twenty members got up and contritely admitted their guilt. Chuck may have been touched by this, but it didn't make him any less tough. When he asked them where they got the drugs and they refused to tell, reverting to the code of the streets, he told them that so long as they used that code, they were "slobs and puking little punks" who deserved the end they'd meet in some alley or jail. The sources of supply were then revealed and forwarded to narcotic officers, who apparently didn't take the information seriously. After that, trusted and forceful members of the club policed the neighborhood. What was important was that the new code of hon-



## PARK AND FIELD

THE Winter issue of *Landscape* (published three times a year in Santa Fe, New Mexico) has in it a diagrammatic illustration of the downtown section of Los Angeles, showing in black the areas devoted to the necessities and convenience of motor vehicles. The amount of space taken by streets, freeways, and parking lots seems incredible to anyone who frequents this part of the city, yet the diagram shows quite plainly, as the caption explains, that two thirds of the surface of the area is used up in this way.

The drawing exhibiting this situation belongs with an article by Lewis Mumford, "The Social Function of Open Spaces," originally a paper read by Mr. Mumford before the Congress of the International Federation of Landscape Architects in Amsterdam, last June. The paper is critically concerned with the voracious consumption of the green of the planet by spreading urban culture, in which the automobile is a principal offender. Mumford writes:

... very little of the planning that has been projected or achieved during the last generation has taken this situation into account. Indeed, the chief work that has been done in urban extension and in highway building has been under a curious compulsion to serve the machine rather than to respond to human needs. Unless fresh ideas are introduced, the continued growth of loose urban areas will undermine, and eventually destroy, our historic cities and deface the natural landscape, creating a large mass of undifferentiated lowgrade urban tissue, which, in order to enable its inhabitants to perform even the minimal functions necessary in the city, will impose a vast amount of locomotion, public and private, and, incidentally, push the countryside ever farther away from even the suburban areas. This kind of openness and low density is another name for social and civic disintegration, such as we find in cities like Los Angeles, where one half of its central area is dedicated to the movement and storage of motor cars. Meanwhile, the great landscape parks at the periphery of our old cities become neglected, though a long motor ride to areas beyond often leads to a far less attractive destination. While this is happening, the more distant public recreation areas by woods, lake or sea are left to stagger under a weekend congestion that robs that facility of its recreative value, for the motor car brings to such distant areas the combined population, not just of a city but of a whole region.

Here we have a perceptive and observant specialist telling what is wrong with our use of the living area opened

esty was born that night, and a new sense of responsibility.

"Dope fiends take dope," Chuck says bluntly. "As long as they are dope fiends, they are no damned good; they are slobs and thieves with the temperaments of nasty little children. When they stop using dope, they're something else again. They need self-respect and then general respect more than they do sympathy. Pity will send them running for a fix; too much laxness with them in the early stages makes them take their problems in adjustment too lightly. I may seem rough on them at times, but I have to be their guts, until they develop guts for themselves. The most severe punishment I can offer is banishment and for guys

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up to us by technology. Mr. Mumford's full account of what has been done to the country surrounding cities is a vivid verification of "feelings" one gets when driving around, these days, and while he goes on to say what ought to be done—he has a well-defined remedy and a program which makes wonderful sense—the reader is nevertheless likely to remain depressed.

Not enough people *care* about such good things. Their scheme of values does not include the things Mr. Mumford cares about. As a result, little or nothing is done about the bad things permitted by organized society until they reach a point where they directly threaten life and health. And then it often seems too late to do much of anything.

Today, we have a population schooled in self-contempt. The contempt is not direct, nor is it explicit, but it is there. There is before the public eye today only one really dynamic enterprise—making money. If you can't or don't relate how you spend your time to making money, you are regarded as an impractical failure. There is talk, of course, about the enjoyment of "culture," of music and the arts, but most of the talk is ulterior for somebody who wants to make money out of culture, music, and the arts. People can't *afford* to speak largely to other people about cultural matters unless they get well paid for it. We have reached a point in the development of the technology of communication where the cash nexus is indispensable. You now have to make a lot of money, somehow, in order to make a non-commercial communication, for a non-commercial communication costs just as much to make as a commercial communication. The result is that there is practically no non-commercial communication. This is evidence of self-contempt—of a culture which has nothing non-commercial to say. We have, it is true, some listener-supported radio stations, but, as an interesting symptom of the general debasement of values, even the announcers on these stations often sound like ill-trained imitators of the commercial announcers, who, alas, set the standards for the arts and free culture, these days.

What Mr. Mumford needs to help him with his projects is a lot of people who have developed a well-established habit of doing things as ends in themselves. These are the people who will have sense enough to understand him, and sensibility enough to work with him.

To do something for money ought to be a kind of confession of failure. It should be the last thing we think of, not the first. The need to make money is a justification for action, but it ought to be the least important justification. The people who think of making money first are the people who transform a country as our country has been transformed:

... the very word park and field have taken on new meanings. "Park" now usually means a desert of asphalt, designed as a temporary storage place for motor cars; while "field"

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### "A SMALL, INTENSE CULTURE"

IN this week's lead article, Walker Winslow calls Synanon "a small, intense culture that should exist at peace within the larger culture, and perhaps teach it something."

There are probably those who would resist the implication that they have something to learn from a group of ex-drug addicts. The Synanon people, they would say, are getting attention because they were victims of their own weakness. It is fine that they are getting over the habit, but what can they tell us except how happy they are to have a chance to resume normal life?

There is no doubt some truth in this view. But there is also some truth—perhaps more—in other views of Synanon. It is almost certain, for example, that a lot of the people who don't take drugs are prevented from doing so, not by any personal virtue, but by an unwillingness to risk their respectability. They are simply afraid. There are, in short, a lot of bad or second-rate reasons for not doing bad things. These bad reasons may have some sort of "social utility," but when the cohesiveness of a society is supplied mostly by bad reasons, then even the idea of respectability begins to lose what little utility it once had. And then things like juvenile delinquency and drug addiction begin to break out all over, as symptoms of the sick society.

The ex-addict at Synanon, whatever reason he had for going on drugs, now has a *good* reason for going off them. And he is working at that good reason for all he is worth. He stands, therefore, in direct contrast to the hypothetical "respectable" people who have only indifferent reasons for everything they do.

There is the further possibility that the sick society has something important to learn from those who were its sickest members, but who are now getting well. You could say that the addicts chose a dream world to replace the actual world they had no stake in and didn't care about at all. They found that the dream world was worse, and have come back among us, but they have no illusions about *our* world, either. They may have a distinct advantage in this.

We don't know whether these men and women will, as private persons, make a "mark" in our world, now that they are getting well. They may use up all their energy defeating their own private devils. But in the process they have made a living model of the conditions under which human beings can of their own will stop taking dope.

People who wonder about Synanon and why and how it works are always welcome as visitors. Synanon has open house on Saturday nights, with a synanon discussion in which all are invited to participate.

### REVIEW—(Continued)

means another kind of artificial desert, planted in great concrete strips, covering square miles, not acres, vibrating with noise, dedicated to the arrival and departure of planes. From park and field unroll wide ribbons of concrete that seek to increase the speed of travel between distant points at whatever sacrifice of esthetic pleasure or social opportunities. Thus wasteland grows at the expense of parkland; and instead of recreation—*re-creation*—we have *de-creation*, or the organized dissipation of human energy with a minimum return in health, vitality and joy.

If our present system of development goes on, without a profound change in our present planning concepts and values, the final result will be a universal wasteland, unfit for human habitation, no better than the surface of the moon. No wonder people play with projects for exploring interplanetary space; we have turned the landscape around our great cities into a mere launching platform, and our monotonous daily journeys in the cramped interiors of motor cars are a preparatory exercise for the even more cramped and comatose journeys by rocket. Perhaps the first step toward regaining possession of our souls will be to re-possess and re-plan the whole landscape. Let us face the facts of life. To turn away from the processes and pattern of life, growth, reproduction; to prefer the disintegrated, the accidental, the random, to organic form and orders is, in fact, to commit collective suicide; and, by the same token, to create a counter-movement to the irrationalities and threatened exterminations of our day, we must draw close once more to the healing order of humanized nature and create a harmonious ecological pattern based on primary human needs—not just on transportation.

Our excuse for not saying anything about the constructive program Mr. Mumford has to offer is that, for the ordinary reader, his diagnosis of what has happened to us is far more important. A barren, man-made wilderness is growing up around us, reflecting the interests and motives of the people who live in its shadows. Mumford wants a counter-movement, and the question is how to start one. Where *do* you start, with a thing like this?

You start by getting down to the bedrock of the idea of self. It should be evident that human philosophy must have suffered some mutilating distortion before it could produce the kind of circumstances Mumford describes. We need an idea of the self that is open to the flowing currents of life, and a conception of ends which directs our energies toward the enrichment of life. The great things have always been done by people who thought about what was worth doing and then set out to do them, no matter what. We need an idea of the self that supports such undertakings.

**MANAS is a journal of independent inquiry, concerned with study of the principles which move world society on its present course, and with search for contrasting principles — that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism under the conditions of life in the twentieth century. MANAS is concerned, therefore, with philosophy and with practical psychology, in as direct and simple a manner as its editors and contributors can write. The word "manas" comes from a common root suggesting "man" or "the thinker." Editorial articles are unsigned, since MANAS wishes to present ideas and viewpoints, not personalities.**

**The Publishers**

## CHILDREN ...and Ourselves

### COURAGE AND DISCIPLINE

DURING October of 1960, enthusiastic private sponsors raised enough money to purchase St. Donat's Castle in Wales, to be the first campus of fourteen "Atlantic Colleges" where the rigorous educational disciplines of German-born Kurt Hahn will find further expression. For the past several years the liberal British press has shown great interest in the "Outward Bound" educational movement inspired by Hahn's ideas. In the Outward Bound program, boys each month gather from all over the Commonwealth to test themselves in rigorous physical trials on land and water, and to triumph over the ennui characteristic of their generation. The Outward Bound program, in turn, derives from the success of Hahn's second large-scale venture, Gordonstoun school in Scotland. *Time* for Nov. 14 reports:

Hahn used the perils of the nearby sea and mountains to make Gordonstoun unique among British public schools. Headmaster Robert G. Chew, who took over when Hahn retired in 1952, continues the pattern. Last week 395 boys were busy ramming small boats through rough surf, manning coast guard lookouts, spotting forest fires and assaulting craggy cliffs, doing the school's chores and striving mightily to win badges for moral and physical fitness. Hahn is sure that Gordonstoun has found William James's "moral equivalent of war."

The harshest punishment is a solitary ten-mile walk. The school also curbs excessive academic competition, ranks academic achievement far behind such official report-card items as a boy's "ability to follow out what he believes to be the right course in the face of discomfort, hardships, dangers, mockery, boredom, skepticism and impulses of the moment."

Some light on these developments, concerned with discovering for youths a genuine "moral equivalent of war," is found in an account of Hahn's earlier work. After his imprisonment by the Nazis and subsequent removal to England, the schoolmaster summarized what was learned in Germany (*Year Book of Education*, 1957):

We had established beyond doubt that through the continuity of purposeful athletic training every normal boy and girl can be brought to attain the maximum standards within their reach. They can thereby develop resilience, stamina, and powers of acceleration—all of which help them towards vital health. The progress achieved often came as a surprise to the boy or girl in training: the experience of defeating their own defeatism remained a strengthening memory. The second contribution of Salem deserves the name of a discovery; namely, that the so-called deformity of puberty should not be regarded as a decree of fate. You can avoid those loutish years, that dim and irritable period when even movements become sluggish and awkward! you can preserve a child's strength, the undefeatable spirit, the joy of movement, the power of compassion, the eager curiosity—all those treasures of childhood—on one condition: that you kindle on the threshold of puberty and subsequently sustain the so-called non-poisonous passions—the zest for building, the craving for adventure, the joy of exploration, the love of music, painting, or writing, the devotion to a skill demanding patience and care. You can, in fact, satisfy the primitive longing for mastery, or call it the begetting or creative instinct, and thereby forestall the sexual impulses from monopolizing an adolescent's emotional life and from seeking insidious satisfaction.

Having seen these *grandes passions* at work in Salem, we

really came to the conclusion that every child had a guardian angel capable of protecting the dangerous period of puberty—not that we always discovered him; when we failed to do so, it was our fault. But in a great number of cases we saw boys and girls grow into manhood and womanhood with their spiritual strength unbroken and undiluted—we succeeded sufficiently often to make it impossible for us not to feel a certain missionary obligation, to unmask the psychologist's dogma as the fallacy which it is: namely, to prove, not only under the specially favoured conditions of Salem, that what they consider a normal development during adolescence is in fact a grave and avoidable malady.

Here some passages from Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* become especially relevant, since they demonstrate the psychological need for traditional "rites of passage" from childhood to adulthood:

The tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and so forth, serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. They disclose him to himself, not as this personality or that, but as the warrior, the bride, the widow, the priest, the chieftain; at the same time rehearsing for the rest of the community the old lesson of the archetypal stages.

It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back. In fact, it may well be that the very high incidence of neuroticism among ourselves follows from the decline among us of such effective spiritual aid. We remain fixated to the unexorcised images of our infancy, and hence disinclined to the necessary passages of our adulthood. In the United States there is even a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young; not to mature away from Mother, but to cleave to her.

It is possible that the American preoccupation with "team sports" unwittingly continues some of this "inverted emphasis": while the athlete's abilities—in football, baseball or basketball—are developed by stringent disciplines, the athlete sees himself as a *function* within the team. The sort of self-reliance which is gained in sports played by individuals, especially those requiring a continual gain in stamina, is rather a different thing. Though the friendly high school football coach may be helping build character to the extent that team spirit teaches cooperation, both he and the team are often a little too much like Mother. The "rites of passage" of the American Indians and of various primitive societies and the equivalent activities of the Gordonstoun and Outward Bound schools are initiations into individual self-discipline.

Moreover, in American athletics, comparatively few actually enjoy the rigors of full participation. The majority of girls and boys spend "the loutish years" as jaded spectators. Yet for each individual there should be some progressive series of initiations into the discipline of the body, as well as discipline of the mind. A true physical education program would focus, not upon the few who are adept in the techniques of a single sport, but upon an improvement in physical self-knowledge for each one, regardless of innate ability or original physical condition. We live in a time when the Delphic injunction, "Man know thyself," needs to become the oracle of physical training. The majority of youngsters, without the assistance of intelligent adults, find it extremely difficult to discover the meaning of physical self-reliance. So, hurrah for Hahn, and for the growing number of his disciples in England and throughout the British Commonwealth!



RELIGION

SCIENCE

EDUCATION

# FRONTIERS

## "Repay No One Evil for Evil"

A FULL-PAGE advertisement in the *New York Times* (Oct. 9, 1960), under the above title, presents another educational effort by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Two paragraphs deal with the basic problem of "attitudes":

The recent meetings of the United Nations Assembly have not been an edifying spectacle. The world's leading statesmen have bickered, hammered on desks, scored debating points, won applause from their allies and boos from their enemies. Some have been more restrained than others in their outward conduct, but on both sides men are caught in the sterilities of the "devil theory," seeing themselves as essentially right, their antagonists as utterly wrong. All are trapped in what George Kennan has termed the "negative dynamics of the arms race."

American citizens can do little to modify the behavior of Khrushchev or Castro. They *can* affect the behavior of their own government and representatives, and they should.

Most of us try to teach our children to behave with greater understanding and dignity in the face of affront than our government frequently exhibits. If the Russians restrict an American diplomat to Moscow, we restrict a Russian diplomat to Washington or New York. If Cuba expropriates an American-owned mill, we cut down on her sugar quota. To accusation we return only counter-accusation; our imagination as a nation often seems limited to the "You're another!" level of the pre-adolescent.

Let's call a halt. Let's behave as though we were self-assured, mature adults. And, since most of us profess to be adherents of a faith that counsels against repaying evil for evil, urging instead that we "overcome evil with good," let's try that for a while.

There are others who offer good counsel for ending "the permanent war"—or at least concerning means by which a more enlightened public, gradually and by individual decision, can reject the spirit of fratricide. The October Unitarian Register, for instance, has an article, "Mercy for Mass Murder," in which the writer, the Rev. Paul Killinger, makes a tight ethical argument against the execution of Adolf Eichmann. Israeli agents abducted Eichmann from Argentina and brought to Israel for trial the former Nazi who was instrumental in decisions which resulted in the death of some 4,000,000 Jews. But since the death of one man cannot possibly "atone" for the murder of so many, atonement is no valid argument for another execution. Mr. Killinger offers material for discussion with one's children—or even, perhaps, in the classroom:

In the ethical sense I can see little difference between the Jew-pursuing Nazi and the Nazi-pursuing Jew. Granted that the Israeli agents felt justice must be done, I cannot imagine they were motivated by humility, love, or compassion in their long search. They did not seek out Eichmann to obtain his confession and attempt his conversion to an ethical way of life. In this case, the ancient God of just retribution seems to have won the upper hand.

The most ethical answer to murder is mercy. The extinction of one life does not breathe back another. There is only one way to be certain mass murder never will take place again.

That is by a basic act of will which rejects violence and asserts the profound worth of each human personality and the inability of any human being to stand in absolute, final judgment upon human actions. As evil often is collective, so also good often is individual. Thus arises today's need for great souls whose will to do the deeds of love and compassion remains unaffected by social demands.

This case again gives evidence of the degradation of human potential when our minds slip into the easy patterns of stereotyped, scapegoat thinking. We live in a collective world where it is easy to think in such manner—but projecting our own troubles and inadequacies upon Jews, Negroes, Nazis, or Communists points merely to another brutality.

There is something about the "peace actionists" today which, as one writer for the *Nation* put it, is "enviable." Sometimes put in jail for picketing bomb-development sites or missile centers, or sentenced because of a refusal to submit to service in the armed forces, these pacifists seem nevertheless to feel a good deal more like "free" men than most of the rest of us. (This indefinable yet clearly recognizable spirit is clearly present at the "sit-in" demonstrations against segregation.)

A classic account of the ethos of one group of "pacifist-activists," taking part in the Polaris protest at New London, Conn., is given by Barbara Deming in the Dec. 17 *Nation*:

How eventful the actions of these people will be in terms of the world at large, remains an open question—how many others, that is, will finally join them. But there is no question that their actions have changed *them*. The people I saw gathered in New London were people of altogether mixed background: Quakers, Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, Jews, atheists; Negro and white; men and women from all over the country, of both humble and privileged birth, and drawn from any number of occupations. They were people, also, of strong temperament; discussions were lively; the group was hardly monotone. Yet the longer I observed them, the more I was struck by a certain enviable air that could be said to distinguish them all—and most particularly those who had experimented with nonviolence for any length of time.

They are marked by an extraordinary spontaneity. All had recovered—or retained—the sense that an individual *can* act, and *has* weight. "If no one else will do it, then do it yourself," a homely, vivid old man said to me lightly—a house painter who had staged a one-man memorial protest in Cleveland on Hiroshima Day. As a result of their commitment to action, almost all were conspicuously hardy—in a very special manner. There was an atmosphere among them both grave and light-hearted. The place was full of wit. The more particular quality and cause of their fearlessness struck me one day as I listened to a group discussion, full of talk of radical changes that should be made in our society. We were sitting in the abandoned store, its windows heavily shrouded (the landlady had insisted on this, for rocks had been thrown through the windows over at CNVA). The shrouding gave the place the air of a gangster's hideout, and as the talk touched upon one thing after another wrong with things as they were, I suddenly asked myself (for I am the daughter of a well-to-do Republican lawyer): What am I doing here? This is talk of revolution. Then I recalled the methods to which they are committed: the rejection of secrecy; their careful advance notice to their



## SYNANON REVISITED

(Continued)

who have spent most of their time wanting to get out of jail, that really startles them. They really get the idea of the open door then, and what responsibility means."

Chuck admits that, in the early days, dozens of addicts who might make good in the Synanon of today were lost because of a lack of know-how. He compares the process of improvement to a collander in which the holes of escape are becoming smaller every year. "Even though some of our most successful members have records as tough as you could find," Chuck says, "it may be that they were ready to get well if given a half chance. So far as making a record is concerned, it is possible that they are giving us a break in our early days by making such fantastic recoveries. We can handle more resistive addicts now. Who knows what we will be able to do in five years?"

In the little store-front building, Synanon was chartered as a California corporation. Then, after leasing the old Armory—a former beach club, really—the problem of raising funds became acute, and without any formal books, and nothing but sheer drive and faith, Chuck succeeded in getting the Synanon Foundation accepted by the Federal Government as a non-profit organization, with a tax exemption for donors. All this was done in two years, and mainly by one man who had to be the equivalent of a father to nearly seventy emotionally immature adults that society had despaired of, and wanted to keep in prison.

Now, a little over two years from an uncertain beginning, Synanon House is a home in which gracious living is provided for fifty or some people. At least 75 per cent of the cash expenses are met by the wholly voluntary contributions of Synanon members who hold jobs outside. As an example, one of the men who contributes most of his pay check plans to make Synanon his home for life. At 35, with twelve years of prison behind him, he is holding down the first job

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adversary of all their plans. If the windows here were shrouded, the door was open to anyone who cared to wander in.

Meanwhile, another group of "peace-actionists" are on their way from San Francisco to Moscow, and they are walking. This is a soberly-conceived and well organized effort to stimulate thinking about alternatives to the attitude of war. The peace-walkers have already heard many varieties of comments from those who stop to stare at them as they pass with their placards. Some muttered, "Go back to Russia"—as did one man wearing a Nixon button, overheard by a *Nation* reporter in San Francisco. But another man smiled and remarked: "It's really inspiring to see so many rational people. And all in one place."

During passage through the semi-arid reaches from Palm Springs to Arizona, discussion followed in the wake of this cheerful procession. Two walkers, having retraced part of their 25-mile trip at the end of the day, sat in a small restaurant and overheard frequent bits of comment on the unusual occasion of the walk's earlier passing. And when the peace-walkers did a turn or two around a Marine Corps aircraft base, they were goodnaturedly cheered by marines working on a jet plane.

Fundamentally, it is the attitude which counts. All these "protest" efforts are actually affirmative, not negative.

he has ever had. His employers, who have hired two other Synanon members, know all about him. This week, he took on the added assignment of carrying the firm's funds to the bank—thousands of dollars each day. This is a man who was once convicted of armed robbery to get money for dope. In all his years in prisons, State and Federal, no attempt was made to rehabilitate him. Once he saw a psychiatrist for a half hour.

The key to the success of Synanon is the synanons, as the self-help therapy meetings are called. These are held three times a week, and the members rotate so that no group is ever the same. Chuck Dederich insists that people release their "gut level" feelings—the ones with strong emotional content. The group discussions, or "war parties," as they should sometimes be called, may deal with an individual's problem as he feels it, or as another senses it. If it is felt that a person is withholding material about himself, he may undergo a virtual inquisition. Anything anyone does that might lead him back to drugs is attacked incisively. Sometimes, it will sound as if a fight is going to break out, but it never does. Physical violence is a number one cause for banishment from Synanon. Hearing the violence of the arguments at the synanons, and then seeing happy and relaxed people gather afterwards for refreshments, is a shock, until you understand that each has reached some sort of catharsis, or release.

Reid Kimball, who has been off drugs for 20 months after twenty years of addiction, gave me an example of his experience of part of the maturing process that developed through synanons. He has always been a short-tempered, impetuous, easily riled man who could be very tough on such occasions. In short, he was the type of person who could truthfully say, "I've never taken anything off anyone." He'd made an arrangement for another man to sweep under his bed and hadn't noticed that this chore had been neglected. There was an inspection of his section of the dormitory, and when the inspector saw the dirt, he turned Reid's bed over, and bawled him out. Reid saw red. In swift succession he shifted the blame to the inspector, the guy who had neglected to sweep, some members who were laughing, and finally to the whole of Synanon. In his past, the answer to this situation would have been to commit mayhem on as many people as he could lay hands on, and then go out and take a big shot of dope. As he sat on his up-turned bed to muster his forces, the anger suddenly became ridiculous. The whole ludicrous process of his thinking came into focus. He saw that it didn't even matter that he protest his genuine innocence about the dirt. For the first time in his life, he was able to shrug off an assault on his ego, and put his vanity and pride in their rightful places. He had a feeling of security without knowing why. A little incident, but a moment that dramatized a major change in a man's life. He really "dug" Synanon from that moment on and is now a member of the Board of Directors.

Chuck seems to have known intuitively that a man's subjective world is only as deep as his objective world is wide. The noon seminars at Synanon House, dealing as they do with concepts taken from science and the humanities, give the members an ever-widening scope and encourage reading. As their world and interests expand, the members are better able to find words with which to express their feelings; they gain self-confidence, and their reasoning ability

improves. Professional people who observe the seminars are tremendously impressed with the range and seriousness of the discussions.

Synanon owes much, of course, to the family life that it has created at Synanon House. Each one contributes according to his or her ability; some cook, sew, or iron and keep house; others hustle for and pick up the food contributed by friendly local merchants. All this makes for a busy family. Everyone is expected to express himself fully—within the realm of good taste—at synanons, and even good taste can be dropped if need be. Without spying, a concern is shown that enables the coordinators to know if anything is wrong with anyone.

Laughter can be heard in the house during most of the waking hours, and almost always there are groups in serious discussion. Usually there are visitors about, some of whom enjoy using Synanon House as a hang-out. Following the injunction, "Display before you are investigated," Synanon lets officials and professional people stroll where they will, and talk to whomever they wish. With the exception of three people who had warrants out for them before they entered Synanon, there has never been an arrest made at the House. In fact, they have had to call the police about their neighbors. Fifty abstaining drug fiends live a life that could be envied by their neighbors. Twenty of them go out to work in the morning and return in the evening, just as other people do. Eighteen Negroes are members of the family, as well as three or four from other minority groups, and there is no friction. Here is a small, intense culture that should exist at peace within the larger culture, and perhaps teach it something.

A young minister of one of the leading churches in Santa Monica decided that the Synanon method would be helpful to a group of young married couples. They came to Synanon House to learn the technique and are now meeting in their own homes with Synanon members—ex-addicts and ex-convicts—attending. Here is an exchange where normal citizens and formerly anti-social people learn the truth about each other. Synanon members have also gone out and spoken at over fifty service clubs and churches, and are in constant demand. In this way, a positive contribution is being made to the city of Santa Monica. In addition the seventy members who are staying off the drugs through Synanon represent \$3,500 worth of crime that is being prevented each day, for that is what dope would cost them if they were using. They could get it only by crime. In prison, they would collectively cost the tax-payer around \$500 per day for room, board and wardens. Synanon seems to point to a humanistic solution to a large part of our dope problem—something our society should welcome, when dope is in the headlines every other day.

In a time when there are supposed to be professionally structured programs for every human situation, even though they exist for token groups only, and when there isn't enough professional help available to meet the realistic needs of society, non-professional groups are suspect, and often outlawed, unless they at least profess to rely on God to an extraordinary degree. Synanon, of course, falls into the category of suspect organizations. As Chuck Dederich says, "We follow the policy of no policy—none of the other methods of getting dope fiends off drugs have worked, so

why should we imitate them? We have the largest number of abstaining dope fiends in the world—people who are living behind open doors, and even moving out into their own apartments. We aren't doing as well as we will in the future, but we are doing something that all who wish to investigate can see. . . ."

In the days of his LSD euphoria, Chuck thought he could resolve every paradox, but some that have arisen lately have made him doubt his powers as well as his reason. Here are a few:

State parole officers have called on Synanon members for help in their group-therapy meetings with parolees, yet both parolees and parole officers are forbidden to enter Synanon House, even for a visit.

The state hospital inspector says that Synanon isn't operating a hospital, and refuses to inspect it. Yet, Synanon was convicted in the lower courts of operating a hospital illegally, then given a stay of execution so that it could continue to break the law! (The conviction has been appealed to the United States Supreme Court.)

Businessmen of Santa Monica contribute \$5,000 each month in goods and services to Synanon and Dr. B. Casselman risks his practice to act as the family doctor, yet the officials who represent this community have condemned and prosecuted Synanon without even conducting a thorough investigation of what it is doing.

The list of paradoxes could be expanded on and on. For example, the California Adult Authority ordered seven parolees out of Synanon when they were doing well and passing their weekly Nalline test (a medical method of determining whether a person is using heroin). Without the support of Synanon, five of the seven have since returned to jail. Not long before this happened, Dr. Donald R. Cressy, Dean of Anthropology and Sociology at UCLA, and a noted criminologist, told a meeting of parole officers that Synanon "is the most significant experiment into the narcotic problem that is being made today." But Santa Monica's leading paper, the *Outlook*, boasts that it won't be content until it has run Synanon out of town.

The fear that seventy former addicts who are no longer taking drugs has created among officialdom, and in a sizeable segment of society, is awesome. When confronted, none of Synanon's enemies can give a clear explanation for their fear. Significantly, none of them bother to investigate the object of their hatred. In a sense, the situation is frightening, since it seems to partake of the free-floating anxiety that some neurotic people try to release by converting it into frenzy and aiming it at any object toward which they can whip up hatred. Possibly, a part of our society is so sick that it can't stand seeing people organize to *get well*, especially when they do it their own way.

Santa Monica, Calif.

WALKER WINSLOW

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